

#### REMARKS

Claim 3 is amended to distinguish the invention more clearly from Cronin.

As pointed out by the Examiner, Cronin's belt has a reinforcing structure 138 or 238, embedded in a resin layer having a middle part thicker than the side edge parts.

In the Applicants' invention, as shown in FIG. 1(a) or FIG. 1(b), the resin layer 3 either overlies or underlies the base layer 1, and the thickness of the opposite side edge parts of the resin layer is smaller than that of the middle part thereof. Claim 3, in its previous form, recited a resin layer overlying or underlying the base layer, and did not clearly distinguish the invention from Cronin. The amended version not only recites: (a) that the thickness of the opposite side edge parts of the resin layer is smaller than that of the middle part thereof, but also recites (b) that all of the resin layer either overlies or underlies the base layer at any location along a path in the papermaking machine wherein the paper sheet is in parallel, juxtaposed relation to a surface of the belt. This is not the case in Cronin. In Cronin a part of the resin layer is above the embedded reinforcing structure, and a part of the resin layer is below the embedded reinforcing structure. Neither of these parts is thicker than the side edge part.

Claim 2, as originally presented, distinguishes the invention from Cronin because it recites a thin resin layer and a thick resin layer, and that the thickness of the opposite side edge parts of the thick resin layer is smaller than that of the middle part thereof. Again, in Cronin, neither of the parts above and below the reinforcing structure is thicker than the side edge part.

These differences distinguish the Applicants' independent claims 3 and 6 from Cronin in such a way as to avoid anticipation under 35 U.S.C. §102(b).

Although the rejection is under §102, obviousness under §103 must also be considered.

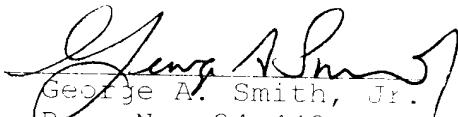
Cronin's invention is concerned with reducing belt tension in order to avoid bulging or bubbling of the belt in the vicinity of the shoe area. Cronin accomplishes this objective by providing a clearance between the press roll and the belt margins. He provides the clearance by reducing the roll diameter at its ends as in FIG. 3, providing stepped-down belt margins as in FIG. 4, or by doing both as in FIG. 5. Although Cronin shows three alternatives, one in which the resin has uniform thickness and is disposed symmetrically on both sides of the reinforcing structure, and two others in which the resin is stepped-down at the belt margins, he does not indicate that there are differences between these versions insofar as any tendency of the margins to curl is concerned. Therefore, it is clear that Cronin is not concerned with suppression of differential thermal contraction between the reinforcing layer and the resin layer. Cronin lacks any teaching that would have suggested constructing a belt with a resin layer on one side of a base layer, and forming the side edge parts of that resin layer so that their thicknesses are less than the thickness of the middle part. Accordingly, there does not appear to be a teaching in Cronin that would have rendered obvious the Applicants' invention, as now defined by claims 3 and 6.

Stigberg shows belt strips having reduced or tapered portions for buttressed, skived or interlocking joints between strips, but does not appear to show reduced or tapered edges on both sides of a given resin layer on one side of a reinforcing layer.

Reconsideration of the application, and allowance of  
claims 3-8, 15 and 16, are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,  
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